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# PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE IN LEADERSHIP EFFICACY DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to better understanding the experience development of leadership competence using phenomenological conceptual framework. The concept of the development of leadership competence has various similar substances and structures between experiences. In so far, essential substances and structures of the experience of the development of leadership competence are not yet determined empirically. Therefore, this research will give contribution to the development of leadership literature.

Research uses questionnaire to eliciting response from respondents about their experience in the development of leadership competence. Sample structure consists of politicians in Local House of Representatives across Malang Regions (City and District of Malang, and Batu City) who may have various experiences. Analytical approach used in this research is nomothetic approach, not idiographic. It does not mean that idiosyncratic/unique data are abandoned, but idiosyncratic data are realized using the generalized framework and applied in the context of testable propositions. Descriptive statistic analysis method is used to determine empirically essential substances and structures of potentials and experiences of leadership competence among the member of Local House of Representatives.

The study indicates that the experience of the development of leadership is related to the important competence for effective leadership. Competence approach to leadership is not new item, and therefore, the relationship between characteristics of a development of experience and competence must be empirically tested in literature.

**Keywords:** phenomenological conceptual framework, leadership experience, and development of leadership competence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reviews on leadership are abundant but researches about *leadership efficacy development* (leadership competence development) are still few. Reviews of this concept are focused more on leadership efficacy development of individual. That is about how the individuals improve their self-awareness, self-regulation and self-focus toward their self-development (Avolio, 2005). Although leadership efficacy development can be described based on personal development, this leadership efficacy development is always underlined by leadership experience. Through the experience, a leader is developed (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004). Gardner (1990) admits that mostly of what have had by leader and what make them to lead are what they have gotten from learning. Most of their learning emanate from experience. Therefore, one central thing in understanding leadership efficacy development is that we need to understand the characteristics of experience which facilitates leadership efficacy development.

Currently, leadership efficacy development is conceptualized as the effort to improve organizational capacity through personal competence (Day, 2001; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004; Galli & Muller, 2011). Therefore, to become an effective leader, a person must have social skill (*be socially adept*) because leadership efficacy development is better when it is operated at social context (Day, 2001). Besides, leadership is a matter of building the relationship and constructing organizational capacity through the improvement of connectivity and *sense-making* (O'Connor and Quinn, 2004). Sense making or the effort to understand the meaning is on purpose (*intentionality*) (Schultz, 1967; quoted in Olvares, 2006). Intentionality is principle or theme of basic phenomenology because it is a very rational if phenomenology is used as an approach to the understanding of the meaning of leadership.

According to Avolio (2005), “some events and experiences may give different contribution to the leadership efficacy development among different individuals” but these experiences are identified as having very positive effect on leadership efficacy development with similar substances and structures from one experience to another. So far, essential substances and structures of the experience of leadership efficacy development have not yet been determined empirically and thus, this research will give contribution to the development of leadership literature.

Arthur et al (2004) have reported that “dark point” poorly understood in the leadership is about experience. They add that a method to access experience is very important way to understand leadership efficacy development.

Based on empirical reality and theoretical construction, the author proposes a conceptual framework to be used to explore leadership efficacy development. Result of research shall be recommended to the Local People Representatives Councils of Malang Regions which can be the subject of the next research such that members can understand better about their position of the representative of citizen.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

### 2.1. Phenomenological Concept Framework

Phenomenology is a strict (*rigorous*) descriptive analysis approach involving three interdependent steps which are phenomenological reduction, description and essential searching (Giorgi, 1997). *Phenomenological Reduction* is a searching for nuance and accuracy in analyzing experience. In other words, phenomenological reduction is a systematic critical study to understand why phenomenon can occur just like that. A related question is how we can attribute an existence with a presence of occurrence.

*Description* is a form of elaboration or explanation about experience. Description provides the meaning of experience. For instance, it is related with questions such as “Why certain experience is meaningful for leadership development? and What can experience produce to facilitate leadership efficacy development?” Description, therefore, is positioned in the framework or context of phenomenological reduction. It is then phenomenological analysis will show the direction of searching for essence or prototype character of the experience of leadership efficacy development.

*Essence* is a fundamental meaning. If there is no meaning, then there is no phenomenon. Essence is the most certain meaning in the context and it is resistant to any changes (Giorgi, 1997).

Binswanger (1958) maintains that experience is understood in three basic levels which are *umwelt*, *mitwelt*, and *eigenwelt*. *Umwelt* (um = us; welt = world) can be translated as out awareness to physical sensations such as enjoy, sick and hungry. However, *umwelt* can be classified generally as motivational component from experience because *umwelt* also refers to biological or motivational condition of world life of an individual.

*Mitwelt* is about how we can occupy a world together with others. It talks about our relationship with others and how we develop this relationship. *Mitwelt* is social component of existence. *Eigenwelt* may be seen as introspection or reflection. It is an effort to understand our existence or experience in such way that we need to understand ourselves and others. It may be useful to reflect behavior, value and interest.

Binswanger analysis is early point for phenomenological reduction because it provides a base to characterize / describe the experience. Leadership efficacy development is understandable from Binswanger analysis context. Besides, base characteristic and structure of leadership efficacy development is determined using this basic framework.

## **2.2. Leadership Efficacy Development Framework**

Day (2001) has presented a comprehensive summary about the difference between leader development and leadership efficacy development. Leader development is focused more on individual and attempting to increase and to develop interpersonal skill and competence, which is called human capital (Lepak and Snell, 1999). This organization invests into *leader development* to build positive attributes within individual. Brass and Knackhardt (1999) assert that individualistic leadership perspective is the most dominant focus taken by organizational leadership researches. However, Day (2001) by quoting Fiedler (1996) has determined that individualistic approach in the leadership training “always abandons 50 years old findings that leadership is a complex interaction between the appointed leaders and social environment of organization.

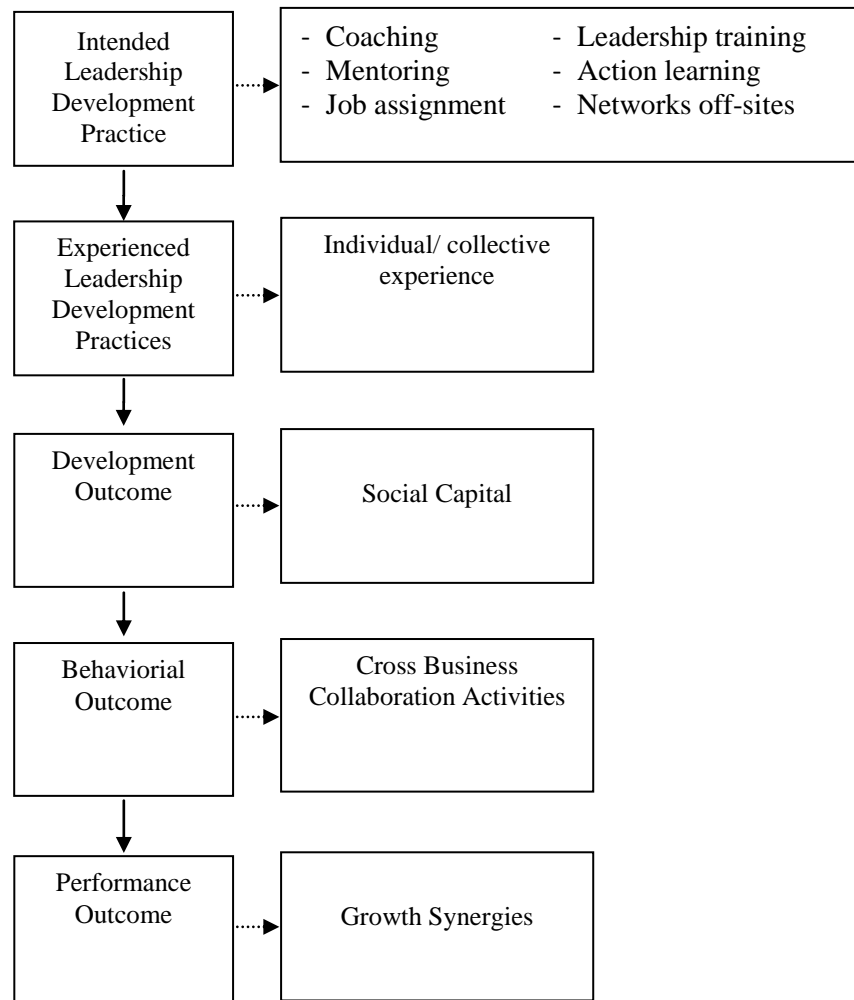
In other sides, leadership efficacy development is focused more on building the interpersonal competence. Other focuses are building the relationship between trust and commitment, developing social network and coordinating the effort inside and outside organization (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004).

If the focus of leadership efficacy development is on human capital development, it is then leadership efficacy development to give more concerns on human capital improvement, which is building the social network which then leads to the production of organizational value and finally, the facilitation of organizational goal achievement.

The conceptualization of leadership efficacy development in this research is consistent to Day (2001) in term that leadership efficacy development is the integration between human capital and social capital. Leadership efficacy development is a form of human development which occurs over time and tends to be increasing (*incremental*) and ongoing (*accrative*). It is also a product of complex reciprocal interaction between leaders, others and social environment.

Therefore, effective leadership development shall be based on awareness that leader is only developed and are functional in a social context. Although individual-based leader development is still important for leadership, this is not enough. Leadership requires the development of individual competence to be integrated with other people context, social system, organizational strategy, mission and goal.

Leader efficacy development process is described by Galli and Stewens (2012) as following:



**Figure 1: Leader Efficacy Development**  
(Galli & Stewenes, 2012)

### 2.3. Essential Substances and Structure of Experience of Leadership Efficacy Development

Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) suggest three essential substances of an experience of effective leadership efficacy development, which are evaluation (assessment), challenge and support. An experience “(a) motivates people to focus their attention and their efforts toward learning, growing and changing, (b) provides raw materials for learning such as information, observation and reaction which produces a view about a more complex world which is different than before”. Besides, to understand leadership development in the phenomenological framework context, therefore, this current research borrows analysis of Binswanger (1958, in Giorgi, 1997) to give clearer identification and definition about the arranged substances.

Essential substances of Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) thus must be understood in the Binswanger’s frame of thought. Umwelt, mitwelt and eigenwelt are compatible to the substances of challenge (motivation), support (connectivity/sociality) and evaluation

(reflection/contemplation). As mentioned by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004), an experience must always have essential substances to be effective facilitator in the leadership development.

Challenge and support substances are focused on intrapersonal development rather than interpersonal development. A challenging experience will push person to do something they have never done before or to see new different method. A challenging experience will also motivate a development and provide opportunity to learn (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004). Support substance is intrapersonal in nature, and the contribution of this substance is to produce the sense of competence (called as *self-efficacy*), which is then manufacturing expertise and perseverance. Although support substance can be also conceptualized as the sources of support for individual, for example when individual needs support from superior, peer, family and friends, the contribution of “support” is motivational in nature.

Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) add that “it is possible that the biggest source of support is other people. Support is a main factor to keep the motivation of leader to learn and to grow. Support aspect helps the emergence of self-efficacy to learn, or self-believe that people can learn, grow and change”. Therefore, challenge and support substances are motivational and focused more on intrapersonal development. In other words, it concerns more with leader development rather than leadership development.

Evaluation (assessment) or reflection substance is helping people to understand about where they are and what they must do to increase their performance. Experience which provides information and evaluation, for instance about the activity of members at the Local People Representatives Council or in their community-related duties, has made possible for individual to integrate action and learning such that performance can be analyzed and improved. Relationship between action and meaning is occurred in a social context such that reflectivity helps people to understand how is their action is connected with other. Reflectivity context will give a meaning to what have been done by connecting between acting and thinking with social structure.

In short, two of three substances of leadership development experience proposed by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) are intrapersonal (challenge and support), while the third, evaluation or reflectivity, is still intrapersonal but also interpersonal. In other words, evaluation substance connects individual and social environment, and helps individual to do *sense making*. Therefore, leadership development experience not only involves intrapersonal substances and reflectivity, but also becomes a social nature and relevant with the goal and mission of organization.

This research submits essential substances from the experience of leadership efficacy development such as *challenge*, *self-efficacy*, *sociality*, *relevancy* or sense of purposive of *task/activity*, and *reflectivity*. Therefore, four propositions are suggested:

(1) Experience is identified as benefiting for leadership development if it has high rank for five essential substances. Two of five essential substances are intrapersonal, which are self-efficacy and challenge, and other two are interpersonal, which are sociality and relevancy. It is presumed that there are four essential substances of leadership experience that can be presented or reduced into two components, which are intrapersonal and interpersonal. Thus, second proposition is:

(2) Challenge and self-efficacy are presented as intrapersonal component, while sociality and relevancy are presented as interpersonal component. Fifth substance, reflectivity, is a bridge between intrapersonal component and interpersonal component. Reflectivity helps people to understand the meaning of actions in a social context. It is assumed that the experience connecting between leader and other in social context will build up the characteristics of leader efficacy development and therefore, it facilitates leadership development. However, intrapersonal and interpersonal substances are reciprocally operated.

For instance, an individual is working in a team assigned to solve immediate organizational problem. This experience may have challenge substance, social context, and perception of goal relevancy, but members of the team may not understand the meaning of their experience as long as they cannot reflect their action and cannot use this reflective process to direct their action in the future (Mezirow, 1991). Besides, to be more effective, team members must ensure that they can be effective (Bandura, 1992).

The author submits a proposition that the essence of the expertise of leadership efficacy development remains in the interaction between intrapersonal component and interpersonal component. An experience which does not have essential substances will only disturb the road to a meaningful leadership development. In other words, if these substances are not presented, the fundamental meaning of the experience of leadership is never shown up.

Some experiences which give a challenge and force people to go out from their *comfort zone* can increase their belief that they can act. If the experience is failed to be understood, and if the relevancy of goal is never realized (that reflection is never happened), then leadership development is never occurred.

In other words, the meaning of action is only found in the relationship with others. It is a main character of intentionality. It is also an essential characteristic of phenomenology. A meaning is realized if people do reflection (Schutz, 1967). Reflection helps the occurrence of leadership development by building the relationship between social structure and meaning framework (Schwandt, 2005). Leaders have experienced development if they reflect about what they have done, what they can do differently and how they can be more effective. It is believed that reflective aspect of leadership development experience is a bridge to connect intrapersonal component with interpersonal component. Therefore, next proposition is:

(3) Reflectivity will connect between intrapersonal component and interpersonal component but both components are still different. Using base phenomenology themes from Binswanger (1958), which are *umwelt* (motivation), *mitwelt* (social), and *eigenwelt* (reflection), the author assumes that reflectivity mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and social substance in the leadership development experience. It is a self-believe of the efficacy to lead, to improve connectivity and to develop social structure. All are realized through reflective process. Based on this view, final proposition is:

(4) Reflectivity will mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and sociality substance, and therefore, it is a bridge between intrapersonal component and interpersonal component.

Because the leadership is defined as a process where people influence other to accomplish mission by giving goal, direction and motivation, it is thus leadership is understood in the context of mission, or generally understood in the context of the job it self (Day, 2001). The elicited relevancy substance of leadership development experience means that “the experience itself is relevant to the mission, duty and responsibility as citizen representative”. In this current research, leadership development is conceptualized as relational model (Drath and Palus, 1994) where organizational capacity is improved through interpersonal competence (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004). The elicited social substance is that “experience is social in nature, through which experience occurs within the interaction between the representatives and the community or constituent where they do representative job”.

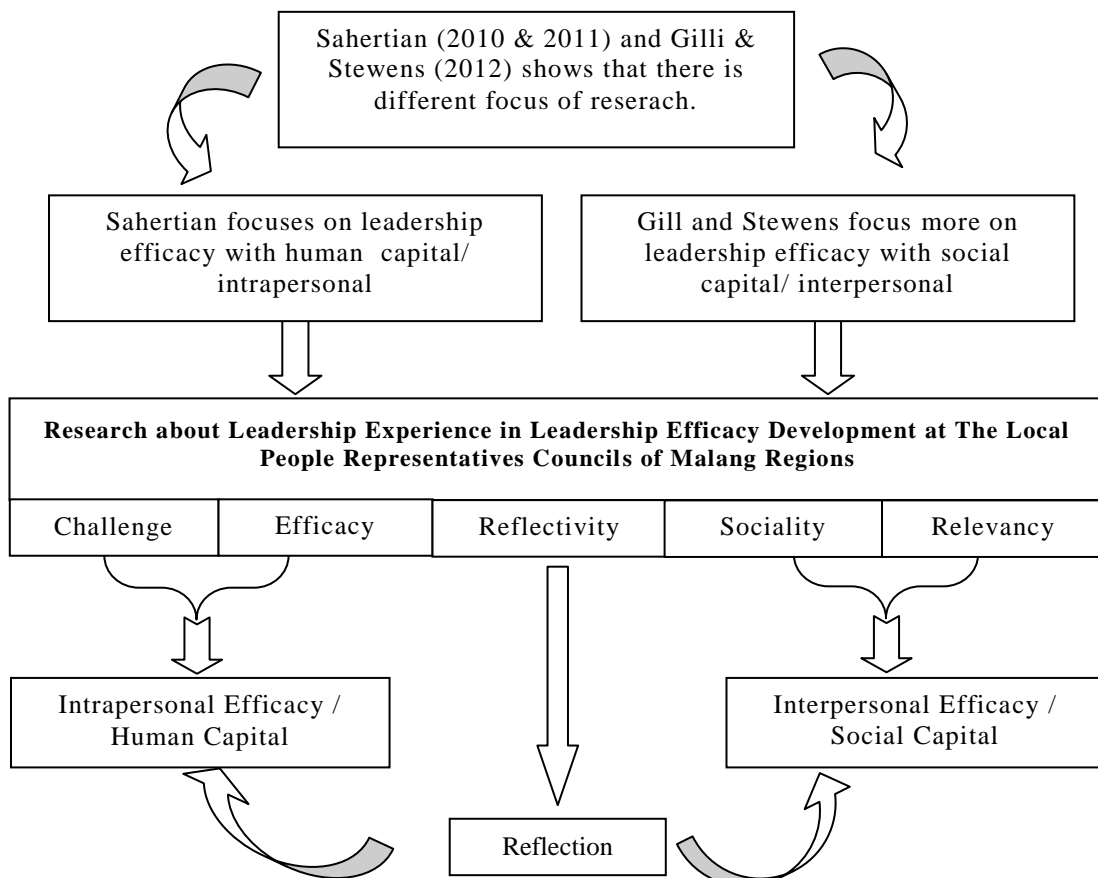
Avolio (2005) maintains that “a fundamental thing for leadership efficacy development is to stop and to reflect what have occurred, what is going on, and what will be happened with some actions you will take”. Members of the Local People Representatives Councils who represent their constituent must do such reflection. Therefore, reflectivity substance is explained as following: “experience has reflective

component, which is that an experience at certain time can help people to recheck and to think what they have done, how they do it, and how they do it in different or better ways”.

Experience can develop a leader if this experience is challenging enough. Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) declare that a challenging experience is described as new experience which pushes people out of their comfort zone, making them working hard or giving them opportunity to learn and to develop new skill. The elicited challenge substance is that “experience has triggered people out of the comfort zone and forced them to use the skill that they do not know if they have, thus encouraging them to think and/or to behave differently or at least to do anything that they do not do before”. A challenging experience is usually related to high self-efficacy (Locke and Latham, 1990). Self-efficacy is defined as a self-believe toward certain task (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is the indication of the sense of owning efficacy by which people believe that they can do something. Leaders who believe that they can lead will have greater possibilities to lead (Bandura, 1982). In consistent to Bandura (1997, 1982), self-efficacy is personalized to develop faith, and it is elicited as “that experience can increase people belief toward their efficacy as the effective leader”.

Research framework developed for this research has referred to various results of research, which is:

**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Research**





### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research is a combination between qualitative and quantitative researches. Qualitative research is characterized by (1) the objective of research to acquire the understanding, the meaning or the development of theory; (2) the verbal data which are collected, selected and classified from data source; and (3) the collection of data by interpreting the meaning of phenomena. Phenomenology is non-positivism approach which is appropriate strategy to observe human and organization. Phenomenology believes that there are many ways to interpret experience such as through interaction or by signifying experience as reality (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998).

Quantitative approach is useful to solve problems through modeling the research, collecting the data, searching and testing the solution, analyzing the result, and implementing the result (Kuncoro, 2004). Quantitative research is therefore designed to observe certain population or sample, to use research instrument, to analyze quantitative/statistic data, and to classify symptoms in the sample. Quantitative method is also called as positivistic which views phenomena/reality as classifiable, relatively fixed, concrete, observable, and measurable. Positivism is also considered as interpretive and constructive paradigm which recognizes social reality as holistic, complex, dynamic, and meaningful with interactive relationship between symptoms (Sugiyono, 2009; Render and Stair, 2002).

Pursuant to this background, it is very appropriate if qualitative and quantitative approaches are producing a theoretical construction about leadership efficacy development.

#### **3.2. Sample Structure**

Data of research are collected from politicians across Malang Regions. The sample is 56 persons. The politicians are the members of the Local People Representatives Councils of Malang City, Batu City and Malang District who have different experience in the politic world. With their various background of education, they have tenure between 3 years and 13 years. All sample members represent their parties. Therefore, sampling technique is purposive sampling. All respondents have ever worked as the leader in the organizational structure of the Local People Representatives Council.

Respondents are required to give response to questions about demographic and their experience of leadership efficacy development. A reason why experience data are elicited is that politicians are asked to think about their experience of being member of the Local People Representatives Council. Of this experience, respondents are required to identify and to describe three experiences they consider as the most instrumental or the most significance in their self-development as leader. Asking politicians to describe there prominent personal occurrences is reasonable because individuals can have different recall about their specific events (Thorne and Klohnen, 1993 in Peterson, 1994). Current research attempts to ensure that all participants can explain three experiences.

After describing this experience, politicians must rank each experience based on five essential substances of leadership experience using Likert Scale anchored between 5 for very agree and 1 for very disagree. Questions are set to elicit the information about benefiting experience and not-benefiting experience for respondents because this research wants to develop a concept from itself and from the supporting literatures. This writing is made in such way that it will be meaningful and relevant to any respondents.

#### **3.3. Data Analytical Framework**

Data analysis is conducted against experience and proposition test. Analysis approach is nomothetic approach. Idiosyncratic data are considered but it is still understood further using general framework against the testable propositions. Cluster analysis is used

to examine the propositions (Kuncoro, 2004). Linear regression is carried out to analyze relationship between elements.

#### **4. RESULT OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the identified data, respondents have recognized the benefits of the experience of development. The experiences of council members are grouped into operational and institutional experiences. Operational experience is a part of daily work of council members. Every council member has experiences either of implementing their duty at the institution of the Local People Representatives Council or implementing their assignment given by political party of each member. Such activity is called as institutional training. The experiences that mostly felt are being the chair of council (chair and vice-chair), the chair of fraction and the chair of commission.

The identified data has also shown that no experiences felt by council members are perceived as not benefiting. Although it may be small, council members recognize it as benefiting their duty. Based on nomothetic perspective, the attention is given on question whether this experience is not benefiting. There are nine experiences in average which are identified as benefiting. Not-benefiting experiences have different characteristic from benefiting experiences. Among these experiences, four members perceive their experience as the overlapping experience.

Pursuant to first proposition, it is recommended that the experience is identified as benefiting if it has higher rank for its essential element. The difference of each element may be more significant in the benefiting experience than non-benefiting experience. Therefore, the benefiting experience is characterized by more challenges, relevancy, sociality, reflective, and increased self-efficacy.

Related to second and third propositions, it is recommended that challenge and self-efficacy elements are represented by intrapersonal component, while social and relevancy elements are represented by interpersonal component. Cluster Analysis is using hierarchical tree cluster with distance measure and singular relationship rule. Distance measure combines objects (elements) using similarity / dissimilarity or also called as between-objects distance when cluster is established. Once a cluster is made, the distance between new clusters is determined by singular relationship rule. The position may be different because the relationship rule determines whether two clusters are similarly connected or not.

Result of cluster analysis is supporting second and third propositions. Five elements are represented by two clusters. A cluster may be given intrapersonal label and will consist of challenge and self-efficacy elements. Other cluster is given interpersonal label and it comprises to sociality and relevancy elements. Reflectivity element remains standalone cluster. Although this cluster differs from intrapersonal and interpersonal cluster, it can connect with both clusters. The distance between reflectivity and interpersonal clusters is smaller than the distance between reflectivity, interpersonal and intrapersonal clusters. It is so because a metrical function of singular relationship distance determines the distance between clusters based on two objects closest to different cluster. Indeed, a discussion about correlation matrix of five elements has supported the identified structure. Result of analysis has indicated that reflectivity is related to sociality element at  $r = 0.55$  and  $p < 0.0001$ . It is followed by self-efficacy at  $r = 0.53$  and  $p < 0.0001$ . In average, reflectivity cluster is related closer to interpersonal cluster at  $r = 0.54$  than to intrapersonal cluster at  $r = 0.49$ . Additionally, in average, elements of a cluster is greater related to elements between clusters.

It is recommended that reflectivity may mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and sociality. Baron and Kenny (1986) say that four empirical events are needed to test for mediation. First, self-efficacy needs to be related with sociality and the result is

that both are very conform at  $r = 0.40$  and  $p < 0.004$ . Second, self-efficacy must be related to reflectivity, and both are very conform at  $r = 0.53$  and  $p < 0.004$ . Third, reflectivity must relate with sociality and this is conform at  $r = 0.55$  and  $p < 0.004$ . Fourth, if reflectivity is controlled, the significant relationship between sociality and self-efficacy is reduced.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

This research uses phenomenological concept framework to understand the essential factors and the structure of leadership development experience. The benefiting experience is higher valued than not-benefiting experience based on five elements such as self-efficacy, challenge, sociality, relevancy and reflectivity. Mostly, in average, elements are related to other elements. One specific element is functioned as the bridge between intrapersonal and interpersonal components. This element is extended by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004), Day (2001) and O'Connor and Quinn (2004). It is shown that the elements assembling the structure of leadership development experience is functional to facilitate the development of human capital (intrapersonal competence) and social capital (interpersonal competence).

Research also indicates that leadership development experience which benefiting the people is related to the acquisition of competence which is important for effective leadership. Competence approach to leadership is not new theme. As such, the relationship between characteristics of a developmental experience and competence must be empirically tested within literature. Although Young and Dulewicz (2005) are empirically connecting personal characteristic and competence, Day (2001) has reported that certain experiences such as work assignment and action learning are related to human development or human capital. Current research is not exploring how the characteristic of experience is possibly related to competence development. The aspects of experience acknowledged in Day (2001) and Young and Dulewicz (2005) are convergent and conformed with the findings of the current research.

Together, Day (2001) and this current research have provided a framework for leadership development model which connects personal characteristics of the leader with experience elements of leadership development, and also with competence development. The relationship between personal characteristics and leadership development factors still can be constructed.

### **Recommendation**

Leadership efficacy development can be elaborated deeply if the next research attempts to review and to discuss the proposition made in this study. Greater number of leader sample may be used, such as those at the Local People Representatives Council, business organization, or education institutions such as campus or school.

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